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A Deadly Poison.

OUR NEIGHBOUR, WIDOW YATES.

BY GRACE STEBBING.

CHAPTER XXIII.

"MY DEAR, DEAR WIFE."

In Jim Stokes's then condition the contents of that cup were literally a deadly poison for him, but little his wife thought it, or he dreamt it. With fingers burning with fever he clutched at it with thirsty eagerness, and had poured the whole down his throat before his palate had really tasted what it was.

The next instant he turned fiercely upon his wife. It

was twelve months since he had taken anything stronger than tea, and the fiery liquid burnt and choked him. It gave him back his reason, too, for the minute, and strong energy. He had laid the cup down, but he snatched at it again, smelling it, and then caught sight of the bottle.

"What have you given me?" he exclaimed.

Mrs. Stokes tried to laugh again, but there was a deep, thrilling note in her husband's voice that cowed, and even to a degree sobered, her.

"Bah!" she retorted, with a very sorry attempt at bravado. "Yer asked for tea, and I give ye some o' the primest sort. And don't think to gammon me wi' the make-believe as ye haven't had plenty o' the same sort a'ready to-day, afore ye come home."

"Never a drop, never a drop," came the low, solemn answer. "Miserable woman, miserable drunkard, ye've done for me wi' your drunken trick."

The short-lived anger had fallen from him now, and given place to feelings that were a mingling of stern pity for his miserable wife, for her present misdeeds, and the prospect immediately before her of future destitution, and of a pathetic sorrow for himself. He was not of the number of those men whose perceptions and sensibilities have been refined and educated up to such a high pitch that almost everything jars, or hurts either the moral or physical nature. But he was a big, strong fellow, in the very prime of his strength and life, not yet thirty-seven, and with new interests in life, even though he had lost his son. He was a follower of Christ now; he had begun to work for his Master. His new example was beginning to tell for good, as his old one had been so powerful for evil; and he loved little Charlie Yates as circumstances had never let him love his own child. And he so yearned to teach his wife.

And now he was to die; very possibly needlessly; wholly owing to his wife's most grimly dreadful joke!

During this short respite, between the first fit of delirium and the heavier one so soon to follow, he took the whole situation in clearly. He had not been nearly a quarter of a century at work amidst a more or less drunken set of companions, without learning how hardly matters went with drinkers in serious cases of illness, especially in bad fevers such as that with which he was now attacked. No. He must die; and so young; and so soon; and so needlessly.

Poor Jim Stokes, the big navvy, was as ill-taught, ill-mannered, coarsely clad, coarse-looking, rough a specimen of humanity as could be easily found in England; but had it been possible to pourtray his inner nature outwardly, as he stood there facing the sudden knowledge of his imminent death, the picture would have had a deep pathos in it, that must have touched even hearts that are protected by a good tough covering from the discomfort of too much sympathy.

Even as it was, something of this may, nay, must, have been visible, for Charlie came back to the man's side, forgetful of his hunger, and began stroking and kissing the great hand, that was always so gentle for him, silently, while Sarah muttered sullenly—

"There, don't go makin' all that fuss. The drop as I give you can't ha' done no sort of harm, one way or another. And if ye really feel bad, and do want a cup o' tea—well, sit down and rest a bit while I get it."

Before night Sarah knew only too well what was the matter with her husband. The fever had taken fierce hold upon him, and he was in the wildest state of delirium. When the doctor came the gin bottle still stood upon the table. The unfortunate woman had been too scared and bewildered during the past few hours, by the fresh calamity that had come upon her, to remember to hide it away out of sight. The doctor pointed at it sternly.

"If you have been trying your hand at dosing, in this case, and given your husband any of that poisonous stuff, you will have destroyed his last chance of recovery."

She had left her child without dry clothes or firing or food, to go and drink herself into drunken stupor, and he had died. And now the doctor told her that she had killed her husband. She almost wished that she could change places with Jim on that sick bed, and die instead of him. Almost, not quite. She dared not wish it quite, she was too much afraid to die.

There was another thing that Sarah almost did, during those days that her husband lay tossing, in pain and delirium, upon the bed that he was never to leave again but through the gate of death. She almost prayed that his life might be spared to her. Almost she did this, not quite. She had offered up no prayer for so many years that she had forgotten how to pray; and she had been so wicked in her acts, so blasphemous in her words, that in the dense ignorance shrouding her nowadays she was actually afraid to pray.

Some one else prayed for her.

After Jim had lain ill over a fortnight, his strong constitution fighting desperately against disease, he became convalescent, as far as the fever was concerned; but the battle had been too severe—it had utterly exhausted the human combatant, and he was sinking fast. But those few days of his return to reason before death were days of blessing for himself and Sarah. They gave him back peace, submission to God's will, and rest in his Lord. They gave Sarah—not then, not immediately, but in the end—all things. The after fruit of those days was, for her, faith, hope, love, with Jesus Christ for her Friend; and "in Him *are* all things" good.

Mrs. Stokes had now learned two awful lessons against drunkenness. This last one especially had given her a terrible shock, for she had overheard her landlady in chat with her son one evening, during one of Jim's most dreadful paroxisms.

"If that good fellow, Stokes, dies," said the landlady, "his wife ought to be took up for manslaughter, the wretch, for giving on him that stuff in a raging fever."

"Perhaps she will be," replied the young man, sternly. "A good thing, too. Anything to clear her out of here."

Sarah grew white to her lips, and cold, as the picture rose before her mind of herself standing at the prisoner's bar charged with the death of her husband, and then evidence coming out of how her neglect had also helped to kill her son. She seemed to have her ears filled with the hissings of the crowds around the Court, with the further dark rumour that perhaps her acts were purposed acts, that possibly her crimes amounted, in truth, to murder, and with sinister threats of what should happen if she escaped legal justice.

For those days, while her husband lay there dying, she literally dared not drink, lest she should be hailed away to prison in a drunken state, and have that brought up in confirmation of the charge against her. Sober, and subdued with remorse and fear, her old instincts as a first-rate nurse won her the doctor's tardy pardon and compassion.

"What has been done has been done," he said one evening, in low, grave tones, "and no power on earth can undo its harmfulness. But I have at least this comfort for you—but for your careful and clever tendance your husband must have died in the fever, without this interval of peace."

Her mind was almost too benumbed in the present to accept this comfort, but it laid up a grain for the future;

so also did the deeply-loving, tender prayers for her which she heard her husband breathing almost incessantly.

"My dear, dear wife, guide her, guard her, teach her, dear Lord."

That was the commonest form of words on the faint, weak lips, but there was a depth of tenderness in them that made them go very directly home to the hearer's heart.

"My dear, dear wife!" The words echoed and re-echoed in Sarah's astounded ears.

Once, the last day, she flung herself on her knees by the bedside in a wild burst of grief.

"Don't, don't!" she cried. "Call me what I am—your vile, wicked, horrible brute of a wife."

But the great hand, now so thin and weak and white, feebly laid itself upon her head, while the tired lips said, "May our loving Lord's blessing be upon my dear, dear wife."

"Can I do nothing for ye any more, nothing, to show—to show——" gasped the unhappy woman, with her voice strangled with sobs.

"Yes, dear," was the pitying answer, "ye can follow me to the dear Lord's footstool, by His grace, and be kind to the little 'un for my sake. I do love him, dear wife, next to you. Be good to 'un, won't ye, dear?"

It is needless to say that the most eager, passionate promises were given. But alas for the frailty of human nature! Within three weeks of her husband's death Sarah had been twice quite drunk, several times on the verge, and although she had not given Charlie Yates actual ill-usage, the poor little fellow had more than once been sick and ill with hunger.

As for the home, only those who know about such things could believe it possible for a well-furnished, tidy home to descend into such a dismal-looking beggar's den, in the short space of three weeks' time. Certainly, the wooden bed and bedding, on which the two fever-stricken patients had died, had been carried off and burnt, and other things besides. But Sarah had been given money to replace them, if she only would have done it.

But what was the use? The landlady said she must turn out soon after Christmas, and meantime she could go on sleeping in the iron bed Jim bought for Charlie, and Charlie could go on sleeping on the made-up bed of clothes she put down for him the night Jim fell ill.

And the comfortless bed got dingier day by day, and more tumbled and hard and unrestful, and the little child got weaker and more tired, and daily sadder for the loss of his friend.

Sarah went on living heedlessly on the little hoard of Jim's careful savings, in her heart longing to turn over a new leaf, outwardly going back to her old wrong-doings, till, once more, for the third time, she was caught back, and made to open her eyes.

For two days Charlie had been ailing more than usual; the second evening, uncomforted, unsoothed, he crept to his miserable bundle, and lay there moaning, till, at midnight, as his father, Sandy, lay dying in his old hospital, two hundred miles away, he put up his sad, pitiful little plea—

"Will nonebodies—nonebodies kiss poor Charlie?"

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE PROMISE FULFILLED.

An exhausted child's low moan of pain is a sad sound at any time, but especially when it comes through the silence and darkness of night.

Sarah Stokes had heard the restless movements of the golden-haired head with ever-increasing uneasiness. Once or twice during the day she had noticed the hot flush on the child's cheeks, and had a fear of what might be coming. But she passionately put it from her. Trouble enough had surely fallen to her share now. It could not be that there was more to come, and through this child, too!

Even amidst all her remorseful grief for her husband there had still clung a tinge of jealousy for his love to Charlie. Next to his wife he loved one of the Yateses, and through her own fault. There was a sting for her in both the thoughts. She saw the child drink down his mug of milk eagerly, and leave the crust of bread untasted as he had left the bit of cold boiled pork given him for dinner. She saw him creep off to his bundle, and drop upon it with a little stifled sob, and an effort, too weak to be successful, to draw some covering over him.

When she went into the room, four or five hours later, to go to bed herself, she resolutely kept her eyes from the corner where her husband's beloved little "Nevvy Tarly" lay. It was absurd to worry about a child's passing ailment. He was only fretting for his supposed uncle. He would go to sleep when he was tired, and as she was tired now she would go to sleep at once.

But Sarah could not go to sleep. Many a night during the past six weeks she had found it impossible to do so. Her boy's words rang in her ears, "So cold and wet and hungry." Her husband's words, "Ye have done for me, wi' your drunken trick."

She remembered the prayers, too, but almost with a shudder, she felt herself to be so hideously unworthy of them.

And so Sarah Stokes lay, thinking in spite of herself, listening in spite of herself, to the first awakening whispers of her conscience. And as she so lay she heard every turn and toss and moan of the little sufferer in the corner.

What was that? Was he getting up? She raised herself softly on her elbow, and saw the little kneeling figure in the dimness, saw the folding of the hands, heard the sweet, soft voice breathe its faithful prayer—

"Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,
Look upon a little child."

"*Look* upon a little child," with such a pleading emphasis upon the repeated "Look."

Josh, Jim, even this little child, had found the Friend, Jesus.

But there was short time for this reflection. With another moan, extorted by the extremity of pain, the tiny figure sank back with the mournful cry of human loneliness, "Will nonebodies, *nonebodies* kiss poor Charlie?"

At last God—our God, our Father—had laid His hand in mercy upon the cold, torpid, choked heart, and thrust aside the rank weed of jealousy, and warmed it with the glow of life.

"I will!" came the choked, sobbing cry. "I'll kiss ye and comfort ye now, poor helpless baby that ye are."

And at last her promise to her husband was kept, and kept abundantly. No mother ever tended her child with a greater devotion, a deeper agony of fear, a more painful intensity of hope, than Sarah Stokes now bestowed upon this child, who had been called to so much suffering through her sin.

When once more he nestled face and tiny, feeble hands into her breast, as he had done the first night of his theft, but now of conscious purpose, every barrier of hardness was

finally broken down. She dropped on her knees with the boy still in her arms, and out of the fulness of her bursting heart prayed the grandest prayer possible—

"Oh, that you could make me grow like him!"

With God all things are possible, even to the making the heart of a woman, ripe in wickedness, like a little child's once more.

CHAPTER XXV.

"WHICH OF THEM WAS NEIGHBOUR, THINK YOU?"

For several months before his death Jim Stokes had been saving something out of every week's wages to pay for apprenticing his son to a trade. Bad pride had given place to good, and he did not choose that charity should do for his boy what he was able to do for him by the work of his own hands.

It was well for his wife and adopted nephew that this had been so, for those savings, no longer needed for their original purpose, now enabled them to live. Without them they must have starved or gone into the workhouse, for apply where she would for work, Sarah could get none. She had earned too bad a character all around. The very landlord of the public-house to which she had brought so much of her housekeeping money contemptuously refused to let her have employment which he was seeking hands to do.

Just after Jim's death the kind vicar and the doctor both had it in their minds to help the widow, but her speedy relapse into bad ways disgusted the one and disheartened the other for the present, and they left her to herself. By the time Charlie fell ill half the homes around had fever-stricken patients in them. Mrs. Stokes's landlady was prostrate, the doctor broken down with the harassing season, and Sarah nursed the child back to health herself, receiving no further help than a gift of meat and tea and coals at Christmas, which the merciful-hearted vicar would not withhold at such a time from even the undeserving, amongst whom she was most surely reckoned. For no one yet knew that the poor creature was even now returning, like the prodigal son, from afar to her Father's home.

There was no money to spare to squander upon drink now. The savings of eight months out of a navvy's wages cannot amount to any great sum. And unhappily, at the outset, even what they were had been so lavishly reduced that the sum remaining for food, till Sarah Stokes should have lived herself into a new character, was small indeed. By the end of February all was gone. Then the clothes had to go, the blankets, Jim's nice table-cloths—all that would fetch money.

The little frail child must be fed, the weekly rent must be paid, or they would be turned out; and where else would they be taken in, now that they were truly beggared, with neither money nor work?

Sarah was having a bitter discipline. She loved the child she had stolen as much now as she had once hated it, and it was growing weaker day by day, more like a little spirit ready to take flight above. With the thought that she would secretly convey it back to its parents, that it might be once more duly fed and cherished, she made every inquiry she could think of to discover the Yateses present whereabouts; but some of those she wrote to at Peterson did not know, and others, remembering Mrs. Stokes of old, and her spite against the family she asked after, sent her no reply.

So the weeks passed on, till one day in May the end was reached. Not one halfpenny left in her pocket, not a thing more to sell, she and Charlie in such rags that all around believed her to be, if possible, worse than ever in her habits, and not a crumb, not one of any kind in the cupboard.

The last scrap Charlie had by way of breakfast. "May I, please, have one lickle bit more?" asked the hungry child, gently.

"Soon, child, soon," was the answer, huskily and sharply—the sharpness to hide the huskiness. And while the gentle child murmured a patient "Thank you," she jumped up brusquely, tied on her bonnet, and went out.

Her resolve was taken. She would go to the vicar, tell the whole tale of her cruel theft of Charlie Yates, and get his help in discovering the parents' whereabouts. The child once safe back in his own happy home, she could go to prison or the workhouse, whichever folks pleased.

But there was a great dread upon her of telling her story of the past. As she thought of it now it looked so black. The hours passed as she wandered about, here and there asking, as before, in vain for work. There was no good in going home. She had nothing with which to feed the famishing boy, and she must wait to get up her courage a bit more before she went to the vicarage.

The clock over some stables near struck six. She started! What would have become of little Charlie all this terrible long day alone?

When he was even two years younger he had passed many such without her pity, but Sarah's heart was changed now, and could feel. She turned to hurry to the village, when there, not far from her in the wood, seated on a mossy tree trunk with his wife, she saw the vicar.

The lady spoke—

"You remember, my dear, do you not, the deplorable state in which that lower end of Puddleston was when we were there, three or four years ago?"

The vicar nodded his head, and sighed. "Ah! Alice, only too well I remember the terrible condition of both place and people. It has weighed upon me like a nightmare many a time since. More than once I have thought that perhaps I ought to have stayed and found work there, instead of accepting this peaceful and pleasant living."

His wife looked up in his face with fond pride, and something of an arch smile too. "This has been peaceful and pleasant to you, dear, but you remember that your predecessor declared it to be a very hot-bed of quarrelsomeness and discomfort. After a while you might have found even that miserable bit of Puddleston a peaceful and pleasant place. At any rate, some one else bids fair to do so."

The vicar stared with amazement. "You don't say so? Why, I thought it formed part of Greg——"

He suddenly stopped. Even to his wife he was sorry to have been betrayed into this implied judgment of another. But his wife was not so particular.

"Oh, Frank," she returned, quickly, "don't talk to me of Mr. Gregson. I have no patience with him. He has too many grand parishioners to dine with, and to chat with, to have had even time, I should expect, to so much as find out there is such a place as Bashford Street, and Bashford Court, and Bashford Alley, in his parish. He is not like you. It is a poor woman who is changing that bit of his charge for him from a literal den of drunkenness and theft into a sort of little Paradise. If I had not seen for myself what it was, and what it is even already growing, I could not have believed such a transformation possible as the work of one person, and that only a poor woman."

"But who is your poor, wonderful missionary woman?"

asked her husband, growing a good deal interested, the more so that his wife's tone was to the full as enthusiastic as her words.

The reply was as eager. "Ah! that is the strange part of the affair, for us. You remember, do you not, a Peterson family, that poor Stokes, your pet navvy, used to be so fond of talking to you about?"

The vicar laughed. "Really, my dear, I call this too bad. You brought me out here on the plea that you were sure I needed an hour's rest, and now you keep making demands upon my memory! And as for *my* pet navvy, indeed! I know that certainly it was not *I* who knitted Stokes' mufflers and cuffs, nor I who insisted upon his having great basins of soup or cups of tea whenever he came over to the vicarage."

"All very fine, sir," was the retort. "But you know perfectly well that if an obedient wife had not forestalled your wishes you would have done all that."

"What! made the mufflers? Never!" returned her husband, with another laugh. "But—yes, I do recollect, of course, how Stokes used to trace his first awakening to a railway porter, Yates, and his tidy Christian wife. But what of them now? And what have they to do with your past few days' visit to Puddleston?"

"Why, it is that railway porter's widow, who is the Bashford missionary. Into whatever house I entered in that locality I heard of 'our neighbour, Widow Yates.'"

"And did you ask her how she began her good work?"

"Well, I could not ask that of herself, for, unfortunately, I always missed her, but I learnt a great deal about her from others. One thing pleased me very much. The neighbours say that one of her pleas for being always ready to lend a helping hand wherever needed, is that her husband, take it all in all, gave his life for the good of others, and it would be hard if his wife and children could not show honour to his memory by trying to follow in his steps a bit. Sorrows and sufferings have softened her instead of making her hard."

"By God's infinite love," murmured the clergyman.

And then this pair of well-mated, true-hearted disciples of Christ rose from their mossy seat, and turned homewards, for the days of May, even when most summer-like, have chilly evenings sometimes, and this was one of them.

When the vicar and his wife were out of sight, some one else rose from her seat also, and slowly went towards home, instead of continuing her way to the vicarage.

(To be continued.)

NOTES ON HEALTH.—II.

BY MRS. ATKINS, M.D.

Delicate children are very apt to suffer when first commencing farinaceous foods, and none of the ordinary kinds seem to suit them. Under these circumstances the following may be tried:—

A pound of pure wheaten flour, tied tightly in a pudding cloth, is boiled constantly for ten hours. When cold, the outer coating is cut away, and the inside of the ball, which will be found very hard, and of a pale straw colour, is grated

fine. Not more than two teaspoonfuls of this must be given to a child of nine months in the twenty-four hours; the powder being made into a smooth paste with cold milk, which is to be added until the whole has the appearance of cream; a quarter of a pint of boiling milk is then added, stirring briskly all the time, and the food is ready for use.

After the eighth month a little mutton or chicken-broth, or beef-tea, from which every particle of grease has been removed, may be given at one meal. If these means fail, and diarrhœa or putty-like stools supervene, the raw meat treatment may be tried.

A piece of raw mutton or rump-steak, from which all gristle and fat is carefully removed, is to be first minced, and then pounded to a pulp in a mortar. Of this pulp one teaspoonful is to be given at regular intervals four times daily, and the quantity very gradually increased, until half a pound is taken in the day. Absolutely no other food must be given, and only a little barley-water to drink. If the child shows any repugnance to the food, which is not generally the case, a little sugar may be put on the top, or it may be given in veal broth. This diet renders the motions for the first few days very offensive, and fibres of the meat will be detected in them; but as a rule this soon passes away, and the child improves.

After twelve months one or two eggs a day, if digested, are very suitable for a delicate child; they may be either lightly boiled or poached, or beaten up raw with milk and a little sugar. Milk, as much as the child can digest, should still be the chief food, and when there is a tendency to consumption, cream should be given once or twice a day, either with stewed fruit or mixed with the milk, all fats being good for such children.

As the second year approaches, underdone meat, very finely minced with vegetable, should be given once a day —some of the fat well cut up being mixed with the lean. Every effort should be made to induce a liking for fat, provided it be digested; unfortunately those children with a tendency to consumption, who most need fat food, have, as a rule, a great repugnance for it, and therefore they should be gently trained and coaxed into taking it; the mother striving to make it palatable to them in every way which her ingenuity can devise, but not insisting upon its being taken, which in all probability will increase the repugnance, and consequently altogether prevent the fat being digested. All through life, in persons pre-disposed to consumption, milk and fats should form a large portion of the diet, the remainder consisting of good, plain, easily digestible food. All the pleasant little derelictions of duty in the shape of sour apples, cakes between meals (which the Scotch call "cookies"), feasts of mince-pies, and other delightful but indigestible cates, must be strictly prohibited; for what in a healthy child may give rise simply to an illness of a day or two, in the hereditarily weakened child may be the starting point of serious mischief.

As regards *clothing*, I shall content myself with a few general rules, and with pointing out the mistakes often made by mothers, which, harmful as they are to all children, are more especially so to all who are delicate. Clothes should be made as light as possible, and whatever weight there is to bear should be borne by the shoulders, and not by the hips; more especially is this rule of importance for girls and women, to whom any compression of the abdominal organs is fraught with danger. Clothes should merely fit the body, not compressing any organ or muscle, but allowing all to have full play, and permitting any motion of which the body is capable to be performed with ease. This is the true secret of the beautiful figure and graceful carriage for which the ancients were renowned. A sure sign that our clothes are compressing, and not merely fitting us, is to find red marks upon our body when we undress at night. On a baby, at any rate, this should never be allowed, and if detected alterations should be made at once.

The warmth of our clothing must be evenly distributed so far as practicable, to facilitate the circulation of the blood. In this respect mothers frequently err with regard to their children's clothes, more especially as regards the chest, which is sometimes too little and sometimes too much covered. With most children in our climate the pretty little low-necked frocks, exposing as they do the upper and most delicate part of the lungs, are a mistake; but with children of tubercular tendency they are a grave error. In nearly all cases of consumption the apex or upper part of the lung, situated just above and below the collar bone, is the part first attacked, and if to this inherent delicacy we add undue exposure we cannot wonder if mischief should ensue. Even on the warmest day in summer, in this changeable climate of ours, a cold or damp wind may arise and strike the little exposed chest, moist with perspiration, thereby causing a chill which, in the pre-disposed, may rouse into activity the latent germs of disease.

The second mistake, covering the chest too much, is of course committed in the winter, as the first is in the summer, and here our boys suffer as much as our girls. How often, for instance, do we see on a cold, raw winter's day a little fellow trotting along the streets with his bare little legs blue with cold, whilst his body is so thickly wrapped round that he is nearly as broad as long. The consequence of this difference in temperature between the legs and lungs is, that the blood is driven from the legs by the cold striking them, and attracted to the lungs by the warmth of excessive clothing. The legs will probably not suffer, except through being chapped by the wind, but the lungs, owing to the extra amount of blood driven to them, are congested, and thereby weakened, whilst the least carelessness in removing the wraps from the chest may, with the lungs in that condition, cause bronchitis, or even inflammation of the lungs.

Children with any tuberculous tendency should, in England, be clothed from head to foot in flannel, varying in thickness according to the season, and those who have a tendency to diarrhœa, which is often a precursor of disease of the intestines, should, in addition, wear an abdominal belt of flannel.

On no account should a girl be allowed to wear stays of any description; injurious to the healthy, they are doubly so to the girl with delicate lungs, whose chest should be allowed to expand to the fullest extent. For the same reason none of her clothing should fasten round the waist, as the compression thereby exercised on the diaphragm, the great muscle of respiration, quite prevents its acting efficiently.

Fur round the neck should never be worn, as from its warmth it quickly causes perspiration, and when blown aside, as it so easily is, the wind strikes directly on the heated part, causing a chill, and frequently croup, or even bronchitis of the apex of the lung.

With delicate children it is very essential that on a cold winter's day they should be thoroughly warm before they go out, as their vital powers being feeble their power of resisting cold is much impaired. On the other hand they must not be allowed to sit in a warm room with their outdoor clothes on, but should go out as soon as these are put on, a good warming having been given previously.

This brings us to the question of *exercise*, which is second

to none in importance as regards our consumptively inclined children. All physicians of eminence are now agreed as to the beneficial effect of fresh air in tuberculosis, not only as a preventive, but as a curative agent. For the delicate children we are now considering, the coldest fresh air is less to be feared than an impure atmosphere of any kind, even that caused by the child itself remaining for many hours together in an unventilated room.

An outdoor life is essential to these children, and how to procure this in England, with its changeable climate, will be one of the many difficult problems the poor mother will have to solve. Her task will naturally be much facilitated if she lives in the country, and has a garden, as she can then instil into the children a love of gardening, fowl-keeping, rabbit-keeping, etc., which will make outdoor life a real pleasure to them.

Under these circumstances let no difference be made between boys and girls, at any rate until the age of twelve, but let the latter have their pets, their garden, their cricket, their wild games, just the same as their brothers. It is merely a question of clothes, and of the girl becoming a "tom-boy." As regards the clothes, if they are made of rough, coarse, cheap stuff, as they should be, the tearing and dirtying them will not be a matter of much importance, and it will be far better to pay for an extra frock or two than to pay doctors' bills. With regard to the girl becoming a "tom-boy," a mother need not have much anxiety, for, in the first place, as the girl passes into the woman nature will step in and assert her rights, smoothing all the moral, as she does the physical, angles, and producing out of the wild "tom-boy" many of the most charming women known. In the second place, even if the girl should be, and remain a "tom-boy" for many years, it is far better than that she should be constantly ailing, perhaps developing consumptive tendencies, and causing continual anxiety to those who love her, simply because she was always being told, "that's not fit for a little girl," or "do not spoil your frocks," and thus remained in the house inhaling a vitiated atmosphere, instead of being out of doors filling her lungs with fresh, pure air.

If living in town, a mother will have, of course, far more trouble in procuring exercise, at any rate, for her daughters, than if living in the country. Therefore no effort should be spared by her to get a residence in the country for her delicate children. If, however, circumstances are totally against her she can still, by taking trouble, obtain a fair proportion of fresh air even for her girls. In the suburbs of large towns there is nearly always a garden attached to a house; let the girls cultivate that—doing the rough as well as the smooth work—digging, as well as picking flowers. In the summer there are lawn-tennis, boating, long excursions into the country, and many other forms of exercise, which the mother's love and wit will devise, providing she once grasps the fact that fresh air will benefit her delicate child more than all the drugs of the pharmacopœia.

Not only in the day but also at night is fresh air of importance, and must be obtained some way or other. To shut up a child for eight or nine hours in a closed up room is one of the most fatal mistakes which can be made; to leave the door open, so that the vitiated air of the house penetrates into the child's room, is about as great a mistake. Fresh outside air is what is needed, and by the help of Tobin's ventilators can be obtained free from all risk. Those who cannot afford to put these up must devise other methods, and, provided the wind does not blow direct upon the bed, they need have no fear of the results. One very simple way is to open the window at the top and draw over it a thick curtain. Another is to have a straight piece of wood, about four inches wide, nailed across the top of the window from side to side, so that the bottom fits tightly to the sides, whilst the top edge slants inwards. When the window is opened at the top the air will be prevented blowing downwards into the room by the piece of wood, and will pass upwards towards the ceiling. A fire in the room is also a good ventilator, and ought to be employed more frequently than it is. To send a child, on a bitterly cold night, from a warm sitting-room to undress in a room only just above freezing-point is to expose it to a very great risk, and yet how seldom, even in well-appointed houses, is it considered necessary to put a fire into the children's rooms at night, save in case of illness? I need scarcely say that to stop up the chimney, either by closing the register, or stuffing it up with rags and straw, is absolutely to be condemned, as the chimney is often the only outlet for the polluted air of the bedrooms.

As regards *baths*, it may be taken as a rule that when a child is warm and comfortable after a cold bath, then the bath is doing good, and should be given regularly every morning. Many children, however, of low vitality, remain cold and pinched for hours after a cold sponging, and in that case it is a good plan to wash them in warm water, and then rapidly sponge the throat, chest, and spine with cold water, drying them quickly with a rough, warm towel. The daily bath, whether warm or cold, should be as regular an institution as the daily breakfast.

As delicate children grow up I would strongly warn mothers against long school hours, with the inevitable bending over the desk or stooping over the needle. Let the mental education be secondary to the physical, and when the grown up girl has outlived her hereditary weakness she will soon make up for lost time by educating herself, if she have any brains worth educating.

Should she be obliged to earn her bread, then let her resolutely put aside all occupations which would entail living in a town, and seek country and outdoor work. A few women are establishing themselves now as florists, beekeepers, fowl-keepers, fruit producers, etc., and thereby earn a good livelihood. I believe also, as I have said elsewhere, that women would succeed as landscape gardeners. Such occupations are infinitely preferable for our delicate girls to teaching or clerkships, or any other form of sedentary work.

For the delicate girl in a humbler class of life it is far better to earn ten or twelve pounds per annum as a dairy-maid on a farm, where she will have plenty of fresh air for her lungs, than eighteen or twenty pounds as a parlourmaid in a large town, where she will be constantly breathing a vitiated atmosphere.

For the boy with hereditarily weakened constitution, let the same rule hold good. Let him make choice of any profession between that of a farm labourer and that of a gentleman farmer, according to his circumstances, and not attempt any occupation which would entail living in a large town.

In this choice of occupation the mother's influence will, as usual, be of very great importance, more especially with regard to her girls.

These are a few of the suggestions I would offer to mothers who have so unfortunately handed down any hereditary taint to their children. It is my hope that these "Notes on Health," by rousing her to the importance of hereditary disease, may cause her to study the subject more deeply, and to consider it more seriously than is generally the case.

AGNES ELIZABETH JONES.

BY MRS. HENRY FAWCETT.

THERE is something very interesting in tracing, as we are sometimes able to do, the connection of one piece of good work with another. The energy, devotion, and success of one worker stimulates the enthusiasm of others; this enthusiasm does not always show itself in carrying on or developing what has been already begun, but sometimes manifests itself in the more difficult task of breaking new ground; and thus one good work becomes the parent of another. A good example of what is here referred to is to be found in the work of Mrs. Fry. To her initiative may be traced not only the kindred labours of Mary Carpenter in reformatory and industrial schools, and the still more modern efforts for the better care of neglected children by the boarding-out system, and by such societies as the Metropolitan Association for Befriending Young Servants, but to her also may indirectly be traced the success with which women have devoted themselves to the art of sick nursing, and from this again has spread or grown out the movement for extending to women a thorough medical education and training.

AGNES ELIZABETH JONES.

Mrs. Fry's connection with the art of sick nursing came about in this way. In the first quarter of this century a young German named Fliedner was appointed pastor to the little weaving village of Kaiserswerth on the Rhine. He endeared himself to his people by his devotion to them; but the time came when he was forced to leave them. The whole village was involved in ruin because of the failure of the industry on which its inhabitants depended. The people not only could not support their pastor, but were themselves reduced to the greatest straits of actual want. He left them in order to seek in wealthier places, not maintenance for himself, but help for them. After travelling for some time in Germany, he came to England, and while here, still intent on making known the wants of Kaiserswerth, he met with Mrs. Fry, and was deeply interested in all she was doing for the benefit of prisoners. Not long after this he returned to Kaiserswerth, bearing with him the gifts he had collected to relieve the pressing wants of his people; but his mind was now full of Mrs. Fry and of what was being done in England by and for women. He and his wife resolved to begin similar work in Germany. They began with two young women just discharged from a neighbouring prison, whose relations refused to receive them or have anything further to do with them. Soon the number of discharged prisoners increased, and the pastor and his wife felt that they must have help, and a friend came to join them in their work. In this way and from this small beginning grew in time a very large institution, comprising not only an organisation to enable discharged prisoners to get work and regain their character, but a home and school for orphans, a hospital for the sick, and an asylum for lunatics. The whole of the work of this institution, which occupied several houses and comprised more than 300 persons, was done by carefully-trained women, called deaconesses.

Kaiserswerth was the parent of all the other deaconesses' institutions which now exist in almost every part of the world. The predominating spirit at Kaiserswerth, after that of religious self-devotion, to which a first place was given, was that the work of caring for the poor, the sick, and the afflicted can only be rightly undertaken after a long course of special preparation and training. It was a Protestant sisterhood; those who entered were first called novices; in time the novices became deaconesses, and the deaconesses were expected to bind themselves to remain in the institution five years. They were, however, bound by no vows, and could always leave if other duties seemed to require that they should do so. In this institution the art of sick nursing acquired a perfection at that time unknown in any other part of Europe. It was here, mainly, that Florence Nightingale received the training which enabled her to save the lives of so many of our soldiers in the Crimea, and to introduce into England a new era in the history of nursing. Here, too, the subject of this paper, Agnes Elizabeth Jones, was trained.

Miss Nightingale's often-repeated lesson on the subject of the necessity of long and careful training was not lost upon Agnes Jones. When she left Kaiserswerth, she knew, as Miss Nightingale said, "more than most hospital matrons know when they undertake matronship." But she was not content with this. After working for a time with the London Bible Women's Mission, she applied to the training-school for nurses at St. Thomas's Hospital for another year's training.

PART OF ST. THOMAS'S HOSPITAL, FACING THE THAMES.

She entered the hospital as a "Nightingale probationer." She went through, while she was there, the whole training of a nurse. To quote Miss Nightingale again, referring to this period, "Her reports of cases were admirable as to nursing details. She was our best pupil; *she went through all the work of a soldier, and she thereby fitted herself for being the best general we ever had.*"

Before referring to Agnes Jones's crowning work in re-organising the nursing staff of the Liverpool Workhouse Infirmary, it will be well to recall the story of her life. There are few incidents in it, none at all of a sensational character; but perhaps this makes the lesson to be learnt from it all the more plain and simple.

She was born at Cambridge, of Irish parents, in 1832. Her father was a colonel in the 12th Regiment, and her descent was from the north Irish stock that has furnished so many great names to the roll-call of the worthies of our nation. She was a Protestant evangelical, of the type which northern Ireland produces. It is easy to label the religious sect to which she belonged as narrow and unattractive; but however this may be, as exemplified in her personally, her religion was too intense a reality to be unattractive. It permeated her whole life, from the time when a child of seven her dream was to become a missionary, to the hour when she died of typhus taken from a patient in the Liverpool Infirmary to whom she had given up her own room and bed. Another deep and permanent influence on her mind and character was her love for Ireland. Over and over again in her letters we come across expressions which show how close to her heart lay her country's good. The training at Kaiserswerth was intended to be utilised for the good of Ireland. "I have no desire," she wrote, "to become a deaconess; that would not, I think, be the place I should be called upon to occupy. No, my own Ireland first. It was for Ireland's good that my first desire to be used as a blessed instrument in God's hand was breathed, ... and in Ireland is it my heart's desire to labour. . . . . ."

In another letter she refers to the time when she "then and there" dedicated herself to do what she could for Ireland, in its workhouses, infirmaries, and hospitals. In another place she speaks of being retained in England for another year's training, and exclaims, "My last English sojourn, I hope, as Ireland is ever my bourn!" and again, "My heart is ever in Ireland, where I hope ultimately to work." Her heart's desire was never gratified; she lay down her life, at the age of thirty-five, in the Liverpool Workhouse, before she had had an opportunity of giving to her own dear land the benefit of all she had learned by the patient years of training at Kaiserswerth and in London. Ulster Protestant as she was to the backbone, and a member of the Church of England, she was a true patriot, and showed her patriotism by labouring with self-denying earnestness to fit herself to lift up to a higher level an important branch of the social life of her country.

She was very much stimulated, as so many women were, by the heroism of the Nightingale band of nurses who left England for the Crimea in 1854. She listened with vehement inward dissent to those who cast contempt and blame on them, and, in her own words, "almost worshipped" their brave leader.

She had paid a visit of a week to Kaiserswerth in 1853, but home duties, especially the care of a widowed sister, at that time and for some years prevented her from fulfilling her strong desire for a course of thorough training in the art of nursing. It was not till 1860 that she returned to Kaiserswerth for this purpose. Very soon after her year of preparation there, she received, through Miss Nightingale, an invitation from Mr. W. Rathbone to undertake the superintendence of the Liverpool Training School for Nurses of the Poor. She was overwhelmed by a genuine sense of her inadequacy to the task. She was a sincerely humble-minded woman, and not only craved more training in the mechanical difficulties of nursing, but doubted her own powers of organising, directing, and superintending. She hesitated, and while hesitating, joined Mrs. Ranyard in her London Biblewoman's Mission. Her work here was interrupted by a telegram summoning her to Rome to nurse a sick sister. As soon as the sister recovered another invalid relative claimed her. By their bedsides she felt, to a certain extent, her own power, and the question often arose in her mind, "Could I govern and teach others?" As soon as these private cares were over, she visited nursing institutions in Switzerland, France, and Germany, and before she returned to England she determined to go for another year's training to St. Thomas's Hospital, and then to offer herself for the difficult post at Liverpool. "I

determined," she writes, "at least to try. . . . If every one shrinks back because incompetent, who will ever do anything?" 'Lord, here am I; send me.'"

She did not on leaving St. Thomas's immediately commence her work at Liverpool. She was for a short time superintendent of a small hospital in Bolsover Street, and later she filled a similar post at the Great Northern Hospital. It was not till the spring of 1865 that she took the place at Liverpool with which her name is chiefly connected.

The old system in pauper infirmaries was to allow the patients to be "nursed" by old inmates of the workhouse. Among those to whom the care of the sick was confided were "worn-out old thieves, worn-out old drunkards," and worse. Mr. W. Rathbone, of Liverpool, strongly urged on the guardians of that place to do away with this wretched system, and to substitute in the place of these ignorant, and often vicious, women, a staff of trained paid nurses. He generously undertook to defray the whole cost of the new scheme for three years, by which time he believed the improvement effected would be so great that no one would for a moment dream of going back to the old plan. It was to the post of superintendent of the band of trained nurses that Agnes Jones was called in the spring of 1865.

It was no light task for a young woman of thirty-three. She had under her about 50 nurses, 150 pauper "scourers," and from 1220 to 1350 patients. The winters of 1865 and 1866 will long be remembered as the terrible period of the cotton famine in Lancashire. The workhouse infirmary at Liverpool was not only full, but overflowing; a number of patients often arrived when every bed was full. Then the gentle authority of Sister Agnes, as she was called, had to be exercised to induce the wild, rough patients to make way for one another. Sometimes she had to persuade them to let her put the beds together and place three or even four in two beds. The children had to be packed together, some at the head and some at the foot of the bed. She speaks of them as "nests of children," and mentions that forty under twelve were sent in in one day. This over-filling of the workhouse was of course no ordinary occurrence, and was due to the exceptional distress in Lancashire at that time. The number of deaths that took place, for the same reason, was unusually large. Sister Agnes speaks in one of her letters of seven deaths having occurred between Sunday night and Tuesday morning.

The dreadful melancholy of the place bore upon her with terrible weight. There was not only the depressing thought that most of the inmates were there in consequence of their own wickedness or folly, but added to this the patients were isolated from friends and relatives whose visits do so much to cheer an ordinary hospital. There were patients with *delirium tremens* wandering about the wards in their shirts; there were little children, some not more than seven, steeped in every kind of vice and infamy. "I sometimes wonder," she wrote, in a moment of despair, "if there is a worse place on earth than Liverpool, and I am sure its workhouse is burdened with a large proportion of its vilest."

Some of the best and most deeply-rooted instincts of human nature seemed to turn into cruelty and gall in this terrible place. One of the difficulties of the nurses was to prevent the mothers of the babies, who were still at the breast, from fighting and stealing one another's food. They had nothing to do but nurse their babies, and they would hardly do that. The noise, quarrelling and dirt prevailing in their neighbourhood was a constant source of trouble and anxiety. Another trouble was the mixture among the patients of criminal cases, necessitating the presence of policemen constantly on the premises. The ex-pauper women, too, whom Sister Agnes was endeavouring to train as assistant nurses, were a great anxiety. One morning, after they had been paid their wages, five arrived at the hospital tipsy; after some months of constant effort and constant disappointment, the attempt to train these women was given up. Besides the strain on nerves, temper and spirit arising from all these causes, the physical work of Agnes Jones's post was no light matter. Her day began at 5.30 a.m. and ended after 11; added to this, if there was any case about which she was specially anxious, or any nurse about whose competence she did not feel fully assured, she would be up two or three times in the night to satisfy herself that all was going well. Her nurses were devoted to her, and, as a rule, gave her no anxiety or discomfort which could be avoided. Her only distress on their account arose from a severe outbreak of fever and small-pox among them, which was a source of much painful anxiety to her. Miss Nightingale said of her that "she had a greater power of carrying her followers with her than any woman (or man) I ever knew." "Her influence with her nurses was unbounded. They would have died for her."

All witnesses concur in speaking of her wonderful personal influence and the effect it produced. The infirmary began to show the results of her presence within a month of her arrival. In the three years she spent there, she completely changed the whole place. At first the police, to whose presence reference has already been made, were astonished that it was safe for a number of young women to be about in the men's wards, for they well knew what a rough lot some of the patients were; but "in less than three years she had reduced one of the most disorderly hospital populations in the world to something like Christian discipline, such as the police themselves wondered at. She had led, so as to be of one mind and one heart with her, upwards of fifty nurses and probationers. . . . . She had converted a vestry to the conviction of the economy as well as the humanity of nursing pauper sick by trained nurses. . . . She had converted the Poor Law Board to the same view, and she had disarmed all opposition, all sectarian zealotism; so that Roman Catholic and Unitarian, High Church and Low Church, all literally rose up and called her blessed."

The manner of her death has been already referred to. It was in unison with her unselfish, devoted life. She died on the 19th February, 1868, and her body was committed to the earth of her beloved Ireland, at Fahan, on Lough Swilly, the home of her early years.

HOW TO FEED A FAMILY.—IX.

OUR next *menu* will be celery soup, scalloped salmon, and Snowdon pudding. Celery is said to be extremely wholesome when cooked, and to have a good effect in cases of rheumatism. It certainly is a valuable vegetable, and at this time of year should be very cheap.

Celery Soup.

Materials.—Brown stock, 2 quarts; 6 good stalks of celery; onions, 2; pearl barley, 2 tablespoonfuls; pepper, salt, and a small bunch of thyme, marjoram, and parsley.

How to make it.—Wash the celery thoroughly in salt and water, peel the onions, cut them up with the celery, and stew for two hours in the stock, with a little salt and pepper, the barley, and the bunch of herbs, which should be added ten minutes before serving and then taken out. Time, two hours.

Scalloped Salmon.

Materials.—A tin of salmon; salt and pepper; clarified fat, 2 ozs.; stale bread, 1 lb.

How to make it.—Rub the bread into fine crumbs, grease a pie-dish, line it with bread-crumbs, then put in a layer of salmon, with a little pepper and salt, then a layer of bread-crumbs, and another of salmon, pepper and salt. Cover this with bread-crumbs, press it down slightly with a knife with a little butter on it (or shred a small quantity of clarified fat over it) and bake for an hour, till the bread-crumbs are brown. Turn it out into a frilled paper, or a fresh folded napkin, and serve hot. Time, one hour and a half.

Papers can be bought very cheaply for serving fish in; but if you have none, you can make one by snipping a piece of note-paper into a double fringe, turning it inside out (as if to put round a cake or hambone) and tacking it neatly on to a piece of paper cut to the size and shape of your pie-dish. When you turn the salmon out only the frilled paper should show.

If you have a bright, shallow tin dish, called a "scallop," the salmon may be made in that, and not turned out at all. Be sure to grease the dish well if you wish to turn it out, and keep plenty of bread-crumbs round the sides, as the salmon would stick to the dish. Pick out any bits of bone before you put the salmon in, as these are unpleasant to put into the mouth.

Tinned lobster may be cooked in the same way, and will also make a delicious dish. Be careful not to open the tins many hours before using, and be sure that the fish looks and smells perfectly fresh. Most tinned meats are thoroughly good, but occasionally they are not so, and then they are very unwholesome.

Snowdon Pudding.

Materials.—One large lemon; a teacupful each of flour, fine bread-crumbs; shred clarified fat (or suet), moist sugar, and raisins; one egg; a little milk.

How to make it.—Grate the rind of the lemon, and squeeze out the juice; stone the raisins, shred the fat, and rub the bread (which must be stale) through an iron wire sieve till you have a teacupful. Beat the egg to a froth, add two tablespoonfuls of milk, and beat again. Mix the dry ingredients together thoroughly—that is, the flour, bread-crumbs, shred fat, sugar, grated lemon-peel (not the raisins), then add the egg, milk, and lemon-juice, and mix till all is moist. Grease a pudding-basin (of a size to hold the pudding, and no more), stick it over with raisins, and fill it with the mixture. Grease a piece of clean paper, tie it over the pudding, allowing room for it to swell, and steam it for two hours; let it stand for five minutes before you turn it out. Time, three hours.

If you have not a steamer, you may tie a cloth over it, and boil it, but steaming is best.

To steam a pudding you must fill the saucepan which fits your steamer full of hot water, and put it on to boil; cover it, and when it boils remove the cover, place the pudding in the steamer, and that on to the saucepan; cover it closely, and keep the pan boiling quickly, adding more boiling water from a kettle at the end of each half hour. The pudding should stand upright in the steamer, with the paper at the top. This pudding may be made with thin slices of citron or candied lemon in place of the raisins, if preferred.

Cost of Materials.

Celery soup.—Celery, 1½d.; onions and herbs, 2d.; barley, etc., 1d. Total, 4½d.

Scalloped salmon.—Salmon, 7½d; bread, 1½d. Total, 9d.

Snowdon pudding.—Lemon, 1d.; flour and bread, 1d.; sugar and fat, 1½d.; raisins and milk, 1d.; egg, 1d. Total, 5½d.

Total Cost.

Celery soup, 4½d.; scalloped salmon, 9d.; Snowdon pudding, 5½d.; vegetables, 2½d.; bread, 2½d. Total, 2s., to dine six persons. Average, 4d. per head.

I. L. Richmond.

A WOMAN'S POCKET.

The most difficult thing to reach is a woman's pocket. This is especially the case if the dress is hung up in a closet, and the man is in a hurry. We think we are safe in saying that he always is in a hurry on such an occasion.

The dress is soon found, but it has been turned inside out, like the rest—a fact that he does not notice, however, until he has made several ineffectual attempts to get his hand into it. Then he turns it round very carefully, and passes over the pocket several times without being aware of it. A nervous movement of his hands, and an appearance of perspiration on his forehead, are perceptible. He now dives one hand in at the back, and feeling around, finds a place, and proceeds to explore it, when he discovers that he is following up the inside of the lining. The nervousness increases, also the perspiration. He twitches the dress on the hook, and suddenly the pocket, white, plump, and exasperating, comes to view. Then he sighs the relief he feels, and is mentally grateful that he did not allow himself to use any offensive expressions. It is all right now. There is the pocket in plain view—not the inside, but the outside—and all he has to do is to put his hand right around in the inside and take out the article. That is all. He can't help but smile to think how near he was to getting mad. Then he puts his hand around to the other side. He does not feel the opening. He pushes a little further—now he has got it—he shoves the hand down, and is very much surprised to see it appear opposite his knees. He has made a mistake. He tries again; again he feels the entrance, and glides down it only to appear again as before. This makes him open his eyes and straighten his face. He feels the outside of the pocket, pinches it curiously, lifts it up, shakes it, and after peering closely about the roots of it, he says, "Gracious!" and commences again. He does it calmly this time, because hurrying only makes the matter worse. He holds up breadth after breadth, goes over them carefully, gets his hand first into a lining, then into the air again (where it always surprises him when it appears), and finally into a pocket, and is about to cry out with triumph, when he discovers that it is the pocket to another dress. He is mad now; and he sees that he has put his foot through a band-box and into the crown of his wife's bonnet; has broken the brim of his Panama hat which was hanging in the same closet, and torn about a yard of bugle trimming from a new cloak. As all this trouble is due directly to his wife's infatuation in hanging up her dresses inside out he immediately starts after her, and, impetuously urging her to the closet, excitedly intimates his doubts of there being a pocket in the dress, anyway. The cause of the unhappy disaster quietly inserts her hand inside the robe, and directly brings it forth with the sought-for article in its clasp. He doesn't know why but this makes him madder than anything else.—*Danbury News.*

SPINNING.

BY H. H. (HELEN HUNT JACKSON).

LIKE a blind spinner in the sun,
I tread my days;
I know that all the threads will run
Appointed ways;
I know each day will bring its task,
And, being blind, no more I ask.

I do not know the use or name
Of that I spin;
I only know that some one came
And laid within
My hand the thread, and said, "Since you
Are blind, but one thing you can do."

Sometimes the threads so rough and fast
And tangled fly,
I know wild storms are sweeping past,
And fear that I
Shall fall; but dare not try to find
A safer place, since I am blind.

I know not why, but I am sure
That tint and place,
In some great fabric to endure
Past time and race,
My thread will have; so from the first,
Though blind, I never felt accurst.

I think, perhaps, this trust has sprung
From one short word
Said over me when I was young—
So young, I heard
It, knowing that God's name had signed
My brow, and sealed me His, though blind.

But whether this be seal or sign
Within, without,
It matters not. The bond divine
I never doubt.
I know He set me here, and still,
And glad, and blind, I wait His will;

But listen, listen, day by day,
To hear their tread
Who bear the finished web away,
And cut the thread,
And bring God's message in the sun,
"Thou poor blind spinner, work is done."

"A VERY PRESENT HELP."

BY B. E. S.,

Author of "Lerrie; or, Links in a Girl's Life," etc., etc.

Mrs. Knowles was in a decidedly bad temper.

It was one of those days (how often they came!) when everything went wrong. The weather was dull, and a foggy, drizzling sleet made everything look dismal without and within. The children, having bad colds, could not be sent through the rain to school, and every poor mother knows what a worry it is to have a whole family of little ones about her on a washing day. Add to this that a teething baby had kept her awake most of the previous night by its fretfulness, and one could hardly wonder that the poor woman was feeling thoroughly out of sorts. It was the most unfortunate day that Mrs. Coleton, the new vicar's wife, could have chosen for a first visit to this cottage.

"WERE YOU AT CHURCH ON SUNDAY?"

More than one person had expressed surprise at her being abroad on such a day, but others answered—"Oh, it's just like 'em, to come popping about when you don't want 'em!" Various remarks had been passed upon her by the critical parishioners of this country village, and one old wearer of a "smock frock" had observed tritely, and in a loud enough voice for her to hear—"Why, they gentry seems to come out in all weathers!" And a companion responded, with a touch of rough contempt in his voice—"Oh, ah! they takes to the water like ducks!"

Mrs. Coleton smiled at this, but it was followed by a sigh, as she thought how glad she would be when this ordeal was over. She was not much disturbed by the inclemency of the weather, being well muffled in ulster and furs. She was still quite young, and had not had enough experience in her present sphere to have found out that a most unpropitious time to visit country cottagers, at any rate of Mrs. Knowles' stamp, is a wet day.

She heard the sound of what she mentally termed "a little domestic hurricane" as she paused beside the door of this house, but it did not deter her from paying a duty call, as these first, introductory visits might most appropriately be called. She was rather nonplussed, however, by the ungracious reception she met.

Mrs. Knowles was one of the class of people to whom the poor Chinaman belonged, who said, when adjured to smile, "If Chinee-man feelee ugly, he lookee ugly;" and she looked very "ugly" indeed just now, as she put on her stiffest manner, and invited Mrs. Coleton to enter. She could not do less than this, for did she not belong to the Church Benefit Clubs of various descriptions? She did not even, as she afterwards said, take the trouble to make much of an apology for the state of disorder in which her one living room was found, though her "blood was ready to boil when that lady's sharp eyes went round the place, taking it all in!" Mrs. Coleton was too delicately-minded to make any observation upon what she saw, and did not know that Mrs. Knowles noticed and resented her one involuntary glance around the room. She did her best to propitiate her ruffled hostess, but, with the best of intentions, only succeeded in making the most lamentable blunders. The children were fairly quiet, and of course formed the chief subject of conversation. But just before leaving, Mrs. Coleton committed a fatal error.

"Were you at church on Sunday, Mrs. Knowles?" she asked.

"No, ma'am—I can't get to church nowadays!" was the quick and gruff reply.

"That is a pity. I suppose the children keep you at home?"

"Yes."

"Does your husband attend?"

"Yes."

"Both services?"

"Generally."

"But it seems to me hardly fair that you should have to make all the sacrifice. Could you not get him to stay at home sometimes while you go?"

The reply was more prompt than polite.

"I don't know, ma'am, I'm sure! Maybe he'd be able to cook the Sunday dinner, but I shouldn't like to ask him."

Mrs. Coleton flushed, and propounded her next suggestion with more hesitation.

"But there is the evening service."

"That's just at the time when the little ones goes to bed, and I'm sure he wouldn't see to *them;* he's never used himself to it."

"Could they not go to bed before you start?"

"I daresay they *could*, ma'am, but a nice rowdy-dow there'd be after they was there; children *will* be children, you know, and my man isn't one to coddle about with 'em."

"But surely he might amuse the little ones until your return, if you take the elder ones with you? The services are not late."

"I should only find them all asleep together when I got home," was the grim response, "and a nice treat I should have to get them to bed then—children are always cross when they're half asleep. Besides, I should have to take the baby with me, and there's no comfort with him at home or abroad, he's so weakly, and fretful with his teething."

"But would he not be fairly good for so short a time? My husband doesn't mind children at church, unless they are very noisy; he isn't so fidgetty as some are."

"I'd like to hear him preach while my baby was whining and squealing!" exclaimed the irate lady, sharply, her wrath overflowing its bounds at last. "Look here, ma'am! I daresay you don't understand it, for you've never been in such a position yourself."

"That is true," was the dignified response, "but I have known numbers who have, and who yet have managed to give some attention to their spiritual good. It is a very sad thing for a woman in your position—the mother of a family of intelligent children—to entirely neglect religious ordinances."

"For the matter of that, there's a good many things in our lot as is sad, ma'am, but they have to be put up with."

The tone was so grimly wrathful that Mrs. Coleton was utterly baffled and discouraged. She felt her own temper rising unduly, and thought it best to surrender at discretion, so took her leave rather coolly, and before long was seated at the luncheon table, detailing the events of the morning to her husband, saying that "she couldn't think what sort of people the Knowleses could be. She was afraid the poor woman was in a very depraved state of mind."

During the afternoon of the same day Mrs. Knowles had another visitor, one who was far more warmly welcomed than the vicar's wife had been, though more unexpected upon such a day. This was an aunt of her husband's, a nice, homely, kind-hearted old lady, a thorough Christian, in deed as well as word. She had been a good friend to her nephew and his family, but, living more than two miles away, seldom visited them. To-day, however, business had called her into the village, and she would not return home without seeing her relatives. She saw at once that something was amiss with her niece, though none of the "crooked side" of her temper was directed towards her. But she was a mother herself; she had passed through the trying season which Mrs. Knowles had now to brave, and she knew how sorely a woman's strength and patience are taxed therein, how wearing to mind and body is the perpetual round of care and toil, how sadly calculated to drag downwards and chain to the earth even those souls which would fain aspire.

So she took the best means she could of helping this tired relative of hers; producing some simple presents for the children, she cleared a corner for them to play in, and made it a condition that they should keep quiet for a little time, after which she took up the fretting baby, and rocked it soothingly.

Before long she was in full possession of most of her niece's grievances, including the call of Mrs. Coleton, at the description of which she could not help laughing, even while Mrs. Knowles continued to grumble out her complaints.

"As if 'twas any good for *me* to think of going to church!" she said. "If she had eight little children about *her*, and all the work to do for 'em, she'd find things different to what she thinks. It's plague enough, goodness knows, to get the youngsters ready for school, and cook the dinner."

Mrs. Bell made no response to this. *She* did not believe in Sunday cooking as generally practised, and the old-fashioned hot meal had been abolished in her home on the Sabbath years ago; but this subject had been agitated between her and Mrs. Knowles before, and to-day she wisely refrained from adding fuel to the fire of wrath and discontent already kindled.

"Well, Lucy," she said, soothingly, "you see the lady don't understand it yet. Perhaps some day she may have a family of her own, and then she'll know more about it. I daresay she meant well. You know it's only natural they should like to see people at church. And really, I hope when the baby gets a little better, you'll be able to get about a bit. It's bad to be shut up indoors from one year's end to another, and you'd find it a great help if you could only go to a service now and then."

"I don't know about that!" snapped the other; "it didn't seem to do me much good the last time I went. The sermon was all about the second coming of Christ, and there was a lot about the stars and images, and one thing and another in it that I couldn't understand at all. I daresay 'twas all very well for the gentry and those that are scholars, but 'twas beyond my comprehension."

"That was in the old vicar's time, wasn't it? But surely he didn't always preach like that?"

"He was always mighty fond of talking about the future and heaven, but he didn't tell us much about the way to get there. Why, he came here last winter, when my man was out of work, and Johnny and Lizzie was down with whooping cough, and the baby too—as was then, 'twas not long before this one was born—and I didn't know which way to turn for bread nor anything else, and he says to me, with his queer, far-off-like look and smile, he says, 'Ah, Mrs. Knowles, what a blessing it is to think we shall be better off in heaven!' Well, I couldn't deny that, but I wasn't got near heaven—not that I knew of, however—and somehow it wasn't such a great comfort to me as it seemed to him. So I blurted out straight, 'Well, sir, we had need be, some of us! And the thing is, how are we to get better off now?' I think he was a bit offended, and of course I shouldn't have said it if I'd stayed to think, but my temper was sort of strung up as high as it would go, and I couldn't stand anything. And that was just how I felt when that lady was here this morning. I know I'm very wicked; I never used to feel so; but I can't help it!"

Her voice became choked with sobs. She had put aside her washing, and was preparing tea, but she had to stop a moment to wipe away her tears. Mrs. Bell's eyes filled in sympathy, and she answered, gently—

"You are overwrought, poor dear, and no wonder. We're all apt to get such feelings sometimes, especially when we're hard pressed. But we mustn't give place to them, Lucy, any more than we can help; we've little to do, perhaps, with their coming, but cherishing them is like courting sin."

"But how can I help it?" And the tone was harder, and a little defiant.

"Shall I give you a text to help you, Lucy?" said the elder woman, gently; "it's a sermon, too, in itself:—'*The Lord is our refuge and strength; a very present help in trouble.*'

"That verse was a great comfort to me when I was in just such a state as you are, my dear. I remember how it flashed across me one night, when I was walking about the room with my Kate, when she was about the age of this baby, and I saw how I'd been finding my load too heavy because I'd been trying to bear it alone, thinking hard thoughts of God for the trials that came, instead of being thankful for the many mercies I had received. I'd always thought of Him up till then as a very great and holy Being, far away from me, and not as a *present* Friend at all, loving and sympathising, and always close at hand. But the scales fell off that night, and I begun to see things clearer, and to feel different towards my Heavenly Father and my dear Redeemer. I never found the burden press me down after, without taking it to Him."

Lucy looked wistfully at the speaker. There were some hidden germs of the Higher Life in her heart still, which made her conscious of a greater need than earth could satisfy. Presently she said—"But do you think it means *little*, every-day troubles, like mine? I always thought it was great troubles, or times of danger, as that verse referred to."

"I don't think any trouble of God's children seems small to Him; I'm sure they're never too small for Him to give h.lp in. I can tell you, Lucy, for I know all about it. I've had the disease, and I've *tried the remedy*, so I can faithfully recommend it. And I'm sure if a mother don't need a 'refuge and strength,' I don't know who does!"

"But I don't feel as if I believe enough in God to ask for it!" cried the poor, weary woman, who was fairly sobbing now; "and see how wicked I've been!"

But then and there, in simple words, the way-worn pilgrim, who had trodden the road through many miles of storm and sunshine, spoke of the One who declared Himself to be "the Way, the Truth, and the Life," and who calls the weary ones to Him, that He may give them rest.

* * * * * *

And Mrs. Knowles found this "very present help"; yes, she did. Found it, as so many poor sinners do, by coming humbly and believingly to the Cross from whence it flows. She did not jump at once into a perfect woman—far from that! The cares and troubles did not take to themselves wings and fly away; there remained still the toil and anxiety, the careful pinching and contriving; the growing, tearing, teasing children, the fretful little ones; there were all the domestic pains and worries; but "now—and how much these words imply!—there was always the refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."

Was it strange that with the change in her feelings arose a desire to make the effort she had thought impossible before, to attend God's house? Though now she had proved that even the home may be made a sanctuary for the worship of the Lord, it was borne in upon her mind as it had never been before that it was a duty as well as a privilege to appear amongst His worshippers in public ordinances. She realised the truth of Mrs. Coleton's assertion that it was a sad thing for a mother of a family to so entirely neglect religious ordinances, when one Sabbath one of her little ones stoutly resisted being sent to church, asserting he didn't see the use of going, "because mother never went."

Before long, the vicar, with praiseworthy sacrifice of self and rest, started an afternoon service for the special benefit of busy mothers, and Mrs. Knowles was as regular an attendant at this as her baby would permit. The sermons were plain and practical enough to satisfy even her; as she observed to Mrs. Bell one day—

"Mr. Coleton preached the simple Gospel."

And she found also that not only the sermon, but the prayers, the hymns, and the psalms, all abounded in spiritual food; she had never guessed before how much was lying beneath the surface in every portion of the service.

Mrs. Coleton came, at last, to alter her opinion of Mrs. Knowles, though it was some time before she conquered her first impression. When she became convinced that there had been a thorough change for the better, she rejoiced as much as her husband.

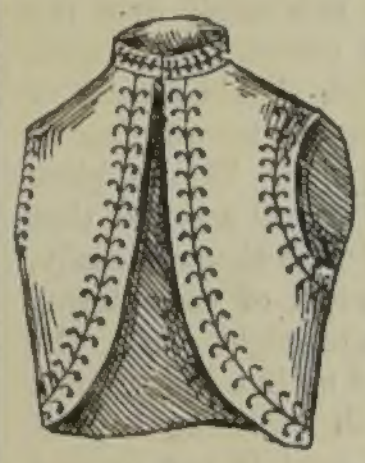
It was not very long before the aged friend who had led Mrs. Knowles to peace and happiness was called away, and a hard trial was this to bear. But, oh! how inexpressibly precious were the last words she spoke to her niece—

"It's only good-bye for a little while, Lucy; I shall be waiting to welcome you home, if the dear Lord permit; and never forget, Lucy, whatever He may send you to bear, that He loves you still, and is always ready and willing to be a very present help."

And heaven, after this, seemed a nearer and dearer place, and its promised rest and joy became more of a living reality to Mrs. Knowles, as so much of its influence and light fell across her pathway on the journey thither.

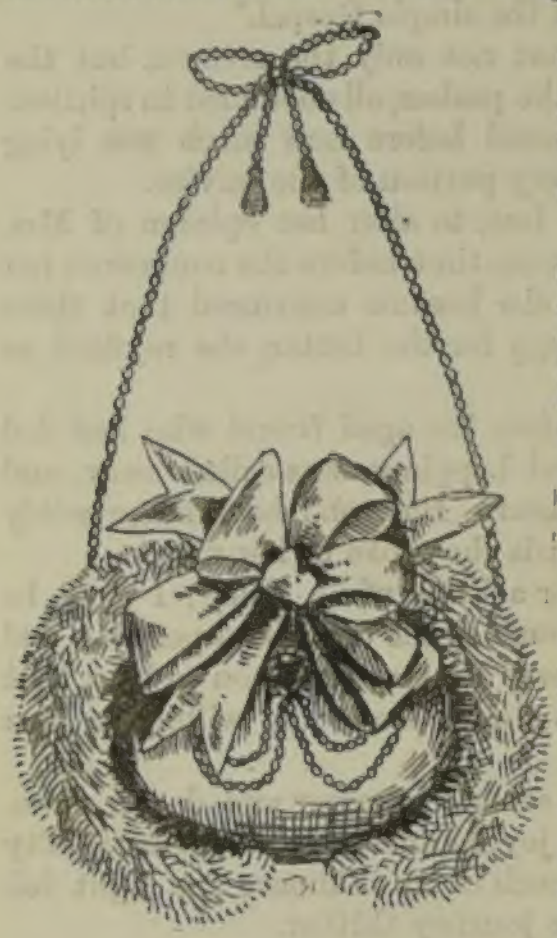
DRESS AND DRESSMAKING.

OCTOBER is a month when we rather review our clothes and see how we can make the best of them, before actually buying new garments for winter wear. Some days are still so warm that we can wear our cottons and tussores, and some so dark and chilly that we hastily get out what was put away in spring, and sometimes wear it when it would be all the better for being done up and repaired.



The best plan is to take time by the forelock, and so to overhaul and consider last winter's clothes as to make them whole, neat, and trim before any necessity for putting them on arises. Perhaps there is a checked woollen or a cashmere laying by that is almost on its last legs, and yet some parts of it are so good that we feel it ought to do us further service. The sleeves may want new upper sides, and we can make new under pieces out of the old upper ones, and by putting cuffs and neckband of plush or velvet in a darker shade, and fresh buttons, our dress will be quite presentable again. Or suppose it is worn under the arms, we may undo the seams, take out part of the sleeve, and put in a couple of neat patches, after which we re-stitch the seams and again sew the sleeves in the right place. This is what may be

called a temporary measure, but as patched places have a trick of wearing through again directly, it is as well to make a Figaro jacket, which is sleeveless and smart looking, and exactly hides the worn out places. This small jacket, of which we give a sketch, may be made either of the same stuff as the dress or of velveteen or plush, or any nice material in a darker colour, or it may be in black, with a grey or a black and white dress. If made in the velveteen or plush, the edge may be turned in all round, and will need no further trimming, or a satin cording looks nice, or if of the same stuff as the dress a little gimp or braiding, a shade or two darker, prevents the appearance of too strong a contrast between the old and the new parts.



Before winter actually sets in it is very desirable to have a muff, not merely because it keeps the hands warm, but because it is most valuable to hold up to the chest, the throat, or the mouth when suddenly meeting a blast of cold air, or discovering that the wind has changed since you left home. There is nothing to equal a fur muff, but furs are expensive, though some kinds of sealskin are very much more moderate in price than formerly, and muffs made of satin or velvet to match the bonnet or hat are very much worn. There is some art in making a muff, and amateurs often fail because they do not exactly know how to set about it. First take the velvet or whatever you mean to have for the outside, cut an oblong piece rather wider than you wish the muff to appear, stitch it up, and iron the seam if necessary. Then turn under and tack each edge, and turn inside out. On this place three or four thicknesses of wadding, cut about an inch narrower, tack this safely over the wrong side of the velvet, and proceed with the lining, which should be silk or satin, though black or brown Italian cloth will do at a pinch. Take a piece of thickish cord and sew in a round that will allow your hand to go through easily, and run it into one end of your lining, which must be quite tight over the wadding and seamed up like the outside. Allow quite an inch of lining beyond the place where the cord is run in, and put in a similar round of cord at the opposite end. Now turn your muff inside out again, and very neatly sew the lining (turned in, of course) to the tacked edge of the velvet. This will draw it in over the wadding, and have quite a professional appearance. A pretty arrangement of ribbon loops placed over the seam of the velvet will conceal it and look modish, and then the muff may be turned round and round, and no join will be visible. It is always wise to have a piece of silk cord passed through the muff so as to hang it round the neck, but it is necessary to keep this cord fresh, as if worn it looks to outsiders like a shabby bit of trimming outside the collar of the jacket or mantle.

Plush is not as fashionable as it was last winter, but it is so useful and wears so well that probably it will make a very slow retreat. If it gets wet, it must not be wiped dry at once, but allowed to dry as it will, and must then be brushed out with a brush soft enough not to injure the nap.

A new colour likely to be very useful in velvet and cashmere, as well as in silk and satin, is called La Baltique; it is supposed to be the dark bluish green of deep sea water when you look down into it.

October is just the time of year when summer bonnets and hats may have the light ribbons and faded flowers removed, and by the aid of darker ones, and perhaps a little lace and a bunch or two of berries, will look seasonable and sensible. That is to say, they will cease to have a "drabbish," washed out aspect, and yet will stand a good deal more wear before the winter head-gear is decided on.

It is considered imperative this season that everything worn should match, as, for instance, the stockings, dress, gloves, and even the petticoat. This is not very difficult for those who stick to one or two colours, such as black and dark blue, or cardinal or brown. Brown stockings and a brown dress look very neat, and with a black dress relieved with cardinal, stockings of either colour may be worn. Cardinal is a colour that washes well, and moreover, mending yarns of that tint are always procurable. Very nice dark green merino stockings are being made in several shades, and they bear washing well. Navy blue do the same, but lighter blues are a little difficult, and nothing is so sure to change as grey or pepper and salt, which when new look so very neat.

Jersey woollen gloves are made in almost every shade, and are most useful, but for those who prefer kid there is nothing like the Italian. It is not very expensive, but is soft and pliable, and wears extremely well.

Flat Pattern of Figaro Jacket described and illustrated this month can be had by enclosing 3½d. in postage stamps to M. L., Office of THE MOTHERS' COMPANION, *9, Paternoster Row, E.C. Please write the word "Patterns" in the top left hand corner of the envelope.*

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